

As the guardian of the airwaves, the FCC is charged with the task of maintaining various programs that represent a broad band of political perspectives. As such it makes sense to encourage a wide range of programming.

However, during public campaign periods, television stations have traditionally been required to provide fair and balanced opportunities to all sides running for public office. As political campaign managers and operatives have become increasingly media savvy, television stations and the FCC, as a regulatory body, have found it more difficult to maintain balance. The recent ability of special interest groups to marry huge funds with technical expertise has created the capacity for television stations to air highly partisan programs masked as documentaries during the run up to elections.

The FCC must establish clear criteria for determining when a documentary is, in fact, a campaign ad. Once that determination is made a television station should have only two alternatives; 1.) refuse to air the ad/documentary or 2.) only air the ad/documentary if it can air a similar ad/documentary from the opposing political perspective.

Stolen Honore and Going Upriver are two such cases. As a large owner of media outlets, Sinclair should not be allowed to use the airwaves to proselitize on behalf its owner's political views! Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.